

to their utmost, reveal an unmistakable conviction of the reality of those verities for which he was ready to sacrifice his life. Whatever he was, he was no mere opportunist to whom religion was but a means to an end.

His greatness as a political leader even his bitterest enemy cannot deny. It is a sufficient measure of that greatness to remember that without him there never would have been, in all probability, a Dutch Republic, and that without the Dutch Republic modern history would have been bereft of one of its greatest forces of progress. Holland must have been crushed, if not by Alva, at least by Parma, and in greatness of personality, as a leader of men and a maker of history, William occupies a niche alongside a Cromwell or a Washington. From this high place of honour no carping criticism can pull him down. The witness of his achievement defies the detraction that would belittle and bedim.

At the same time, without the grand qualities of the people which he led, William must have succumbed at one or other of the desperate crises of the struggle. In spite of the pettiness of provincial egotism that sometimes clogged his combinations, the heroism and determination of these Dutch patriots, immortalised in many a thrilling episode, show that they were worthy to be the followers, the co-workers of such a leader in the vindication of national and individual rights. If ever a people was destined by its own strength of character to great things, it was this stout-hearted, strong-willed, steel-nerved Dutch folk. Happily, too, the exigencies of the time made for the ultimate success of their cause. Protestant Germany might be lukewarm, Protestant England unreliable, and it seemed more than once as if the lack of solidarity on the Protestant side must inevitably result in the destruction of the handful of heroes who were manfully defending the Protestant citadel against such fearful odds. But the forces of the Counter Reformation were not united in the crusade of coercion. The Huguenot struggle lamed the aggressive power of France. The jealousy and friction between France and Spain still further dislocated the reaction against the Reformation, while the attempt to conquer Portugal and England prevented Philip from bringing all his strength to bear in support of Parma in the Netherlands.